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ABSTRACT

In 1991, the superintendency was characterized by a high turnover rate and a shortage of qualified applicants willing to take the job. In addition, no two states had exactly the same certification standards for superintendents. This paper presents findings of a national survey that examined superintendent-certification requirements by state. During spring 1990, letters of inquiry were sent to each of the 50 chief state school officers and to the District of Columbia. A total of 47 usable responses were received. The survey gathered data about each state's requirements for the superintendency: degree, number of hours, specific courses, teaching experience, administrative experience, and clinical field experience. State certification requirements are depicted in a table. Following an overview of guidelines for superintendent-certification requirements, the paper recommends the creation of some type of national clearinghouse to oversee the certification process, which uses a combination of guidelines advocated by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (Contains nine references.) (LMI)

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AM I CERTIFIABLE?: SUPERINTENDENTS ON THE MOVE

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AM I CERTIFIABLE?: SUPERINTENDENTS ON THE MOVE

THE PRESENT

Chief school administrators seem to be an endangered species. According to a January 14, 1991 article in Newsweek, the average tenure of a large city (e.g. Kansas City, Boston, Chicago) school district superintendent is two and one half years; and there is a shortage of qualified applicants willing to take the job. School districts in cities like Springfield, Illinois (population 100,000), are facing a shortage of qualified applicants. The February 3, 1991 State Journal Register (Springfield, IL) reports:

> The Springfield public school district might have a tough time finding a new superintendent - there are fewer potential candidates for the job coming up through the ranks nationwide, and increasing numbers of school districts are looking for chief administrators.
>
> Across the country, at least 17 large school districts are looking for superintendents, and their boards are finding the pool of applicants is shrinking. Many mid-size districts across the country face the same problem, and this may be just the beginning.

Many of these positions are not unattractive, both in terms of salary and fringe benefits. Houston will pay $147,000 plus fringe benefits, and Springfield has indicated that they will be paying $90,000, but it is negotiable for the right person.

Why then are there so few "qualified applicants" for these very desirable positions? This is not a question with a simple answer, but undoubtedly one of the problems has to do with state certification or licensing requirements. After Ted Kimbrough was hired as the superintendent of the City of Chicago Public Schools, downstate superintendents were mildly amused to learn that he was not eligible for certification as a school superintendent in Illinois. The Illinois Legislature has since corrected this oversight by enacting special legislation. Most superintendents, however, cannot expect that quality of legislative support. Baptist (1989), in her study of certification requirements, noted that no two states had exactly the same certification standards. While there are similarities, there is no reason for them to set the same standards. While national certification of superintendents has long been a dream, it is not yet a reality.

Each job vacancy announcement usually ends with a disclaimer that "assurance of certification is the responsibility of the applicant, and the applicant should contact XYZ, Office of Certification/Licensing, State Board of Education, Capital City, XX." This leaves the applicant in the nebulous position of contacting a state official who generally will give some informal opinion of possible certification over the telephone, if the applicant is fortunate. In many cases, an opinion will only be rendered after a formal evaluation of the transcript is completed which can be costly and/or time consuming. In even worse cases, the contact results in receiving a poorly worded brochure or a copy of the state statute with vague references to administrative regulations.

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Sparkman and Campbell (1991) in reviewing state certification of educational administrators noted the following:

1. States have the legal authority for certification of administrators.

2. There does not exist a single source of information about certification requirements in the 50 states.

3. In recent years, states have made many changes in the certification of school administrators including more specification of competencies and skills, use of testing and the use of non-renewable initial certificates.

4. Testing needs to be reviewed to determine what is being tested. Should the test reflect entry level knowledge and skills or should the test cover what an "experienced" administrator should know?

5. We need to consider the status of women and minorities and determine whether current certification standards discriminate.

6. The types of competencies and skills that have been delineated by the states reflect a blend of management and leadership.

7. We are seeing a more clear partnership between the states and universities in developing certification requirements for administrators (pp.41 - 44).

PROJECT DESIGN

To further investigate this issue, the researchers conducted a national survey of certification requirements by state during the spring of 1990. Letters of inquiry were sent to each of the fifty chief state school officers and to the District of Columbia; of the fifty-one, forty-seven responded. Each of the responses was disaggregated according to the following fields: Degree Required, Hours Required, Specific Courses Required, Teaching Experience Required, Administrative Experience Required, Clinical Field Experience, and Other. These descriptors seem to be critical discriminators between states and also appear to be the least negotiable. Baptist (1989) noted that the certification requirements in states are very slow to change. Many states modified their certification requirements during the 1980s in reaction to A Nation at Risk, and some states are still modifying their requirements; but the impetus has slowed down.

Recognizing the complexity of the certification process and the short turn around time which is typically given in job application brochures, the researchers are entering the disaggregated data into a data base which will allow the applicant to quickly determine if he/she meets at least the minimal stated requirements. If the candidate does not meet at least these requirements, then the certification process could be frustrating, costly, time consuming, distracting and disappointing. Table 1 displays the data on current certification requirements.

State	Degree Required	Hours Required	Specific Courses Required	Teaching Experience Required	Administrative Experience Required	Clinical Field Experience	Other
Vermont	Masters EDAD		Planning-Finance Facilities-Law Personnel-Curr	3 years	2 years		
Virginia	Masters	60	Curr-Prsnl-Supv Facilities-Finance S/C Relations-Law Research-Planning Philosophy of Educ				
Washington	Masters+ 10		State Approved - Program	2 years			Regency credit
West Virginia	Masters			3 years			GenContentTest Employed--Supv of Instruction
Wisconsin	Ed.S.		S/C Relations-Curr Finance-Personnel Evaluation-Ldrshp	3 years		yes	
Wyoming	Ed.S.	60	EDAD-Law-Finance Supv-Personnel Curr-CurrentTrends	3 years			

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State	Degree Required	Hours Required	Specific Courses Required	Teaching Experience Required	Administrative Experience Required	Clinical Field Experience	Other
North Carolina	Ed.S. *Masters			3 years	1 year		*10 sem hrs must hve been earned in 5 yr precede application
North Dakota	EDAD Masters		Admin-Curr-Supv)20 Finance-Law)hrs	includes adm 4 years	2 years		Both sec & elem supv courses required
Ohio	Masters	60	Curr-EDAD Foundations		3 years		Recommendation Cert Exam
Oklahoma	Masters+	30	Personnel-Finance Planning-Law Supervision	2 years	2 years		1 week summer training
Oregon	Masters		Planning-Law S/C Relations			4 sem hrs	
Pennsyl-vania	2 yr grad program *70 sem hrs			6 years combination	3 years		
Rhode Island	Masters	36	S/C Relations-Curr Research-Finance Supv-Evaluation	8 years combination			NTE
South Carolina	Masters			7 years combination	2 years		Adv training prog for supv 590 on NTE
South Dakota	Masters			3 years *2 yrs must be teaching	1 year		Teaching Certificate
Tennessee	Masters+ 30		Supv-Curr-Finance Facilities-Trans C/S Relations	5 years combination			
Texas	Masters+	15					EXCET Exam
Utah	Masters				2 years	yes	

State	Degree Required	Hours Required	Specific Courses Required	Teaching Experience Required	Administrative Experience Required	Clinical Field Experience	Other
Michigan	Masters		Ldrshp-Law-Mgmt Finance-Supv-Curr Adult Education	3 years			
Minnesota	Masters+ or Ed.S.	45		3 years		200 hrs yes	
Mississippi	EDAD Masters			2 years			At or above 25% of NTE Exam
Missouri	2 yr grad program		Psych-Rsrch-Law City Schs-Finance Supv-Curr-Prsnl Design/C-S	4 years combination			Recommendation Assessment
Montana	EDAD Masters	24	Facilities-ELED Finance-El Curr PR-Sec Educ & Curr	3 years	1 year	1 year	
Nebraska	Ed.S.				in same system 2 years		*6 sem hrs grad wrk completed within last 3 yr
Nevada	Masters+	9	EDAD-Law-Supv Finance-Curr	3 years			
New Hampshire	Certificate of Advanced Grad Study		Supv-Planning-Law Finance-Facilities S/C Relations-Curr			25 hr. in-service	Board of Review Screening
New Jersey	Masters	30	EDAD-Law Supv-Curriculum	3 years	3 years	1 yr can be substituted for 1 yr adm exprnce	*written exam as of 2/89
New Mexico	Masters		18 hours in EDAD			180 hours	NTE
New York	Masters	60	24 hours in EDAD	3 years combination		yes	

State	Degree Required	Hours Required	Specific Courses Required	Teaching Experience Required	Administrative Experience Required	Clinical Field Experience	Other
Idaho	Ed.S.	Post-masters 35	Finance-Spec.Serv. Personnel-Fed Prog C/S Relations	4 years	1 year	OR 1 year	
Illinois	Masters+	30	6 hrs-PublicSchGovn 6 hrs-PublicSchMgmt 6 hrs-Educ Planning	2 years	2 years	yes	Basic Skills Test-Subj Matter Test
Indiana	Ed.S.		12-18 hrs-EDAD 12-18 hrs-Instructn 9-18 hrs-Thry/Rsrch	3 years	5 years		*Out of state must have Supt endrsmt from another state
Iowa	Masters+ Ed.S.	30	Gen Elem-Theory-Law Early Adol-Curr,S-C Secondary-Finance Prsnl-Facilities	8 yrs (with 3 in adm)	3 years	yes	
Kansas	Grad Degree		Prsnl-Finance Law-Curriculum	2 years			
Kentucky	Masters+	36	Supt-Finance Facilities	3 years	2 years		*Renewal requir addtl crswrk
Louisiana	Masters	(30-EDAD) 48	Law-Prin-Rsrch Supt-Finance Curr-S/C Relation Foundations		5 years		*Asst Supt must meet same requirements
Maine	Masters *In any field but preferably Ed Admin		S/C Relations Law-Supv-Thry Finance-Curr Leadership	3 years	3 years	15 wks or 1 full yr as Asst. Supt.	
Maryland	Masters+	15	Supv-Curr Content	3 years	2 years		
Massachu-setts		24		3 years	3 years	300 hrs	

TABLE 1

STATE CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS
FOR SUPERINTENDENTS

State	Degree Required	Hours Required	Specific Courses Required	Teaching Experience Required	Administrative Experience Required	Clinical Field Experience	Other
Alabama	Masters		Exceptional Child Educ Admin	3 years		3 s.h.	2 levels 5 & 6 year
Alaska	Masters			3 years			regency credit
Arizona	Masters	45		3 years		yes	
Arkansas	(30 hrs.-EDAD) Masters	Grad Hours 60		3 years	1 year		*acceptable scores on NTE in EdAd & Supv
California	M.S. in EDAD			3 years	2 years	1 year	CBEST at least 123
Colorado	Masters			3 years		yes	
Connecticut	Masters+	30 *Beyond M.S.	Foundation Ed-EDAD Curr-Supv-Personnel	8 years combination	3 years		
Delaware	Masters+	30	Curr-Business Adm Supv-Personnel	3 years		1 yr/lieu of 1 yr teaching	
District of Columbia	Masters			*5 yrs in field of education	Asst Prin 2 yrs OR Supervisor 4 years		*eligibility determined by by special panel
Florida	Masters		Communications Mgmt-Operations	3 years			ELECTED POSITION Cert. test for Principal
Georgia	Masters		Supervision Curriculum	3 years combination	1 year		Certification Test
Hawaii	Masters	21 EDAD		5 years	1 year	Sch Adm Training	Tenure in Dept of Educ

THE FUTURE

Certification requirements for superintendents and the preparation programs of colleges and universities are very closely related now and in the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, there has not been a great deal of research and writing in this area. The American Association of School Administrators in 1982 published a document, Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators, which provided a possible glimpse of the future. This document was prepared by AASA for use by state departments and training institutions to assist state departments of education and training institutions in:

> refining certification and doctoral programs in educational administration.
>
> preparing for state, regional or national accreditation visits.
>
> strengthening the profession (p.2).

The guidelines were designed to complement certification requirements in the various states since they are applicable and basic to successful educational leadership at all administrative levels. The AASA document recognized six different challenges which were causing changes in the types of programs needed in schools and changes in the type and delivery methods for training effective educational leaders. These six sources of change were:

1) changing demographics
2) unstable economic structure
3) new technology
4) labor market opportunities
5) cultural diversity and human rights
6) changing family structures (p.3)

Further, the report suggested that these challenges could only be met by changing the method by which administrators were prepared. This would necessitate changing the requirements for certification. This was an ambitious document published prior to the nationwide call for education reforms during the mid 1980s which led to new certification requirements in some states. Many of the reforms suggested in the document were implemented. Specific reforms were: improved assessment programs to determine the entry level competencies of graduate students, the use of more adjunct professors to combine theory and practice, a greater use of simulation materials in the classroom to make programs more like the "real world," and an increased use of field based clinical components, usually identified as an "internship" experience.

According to AASA, chief school administrators must be capable of the following:

1. Establish and maintain a positive and open learning environment to bring about the motivation and social integration of students and staff.

2. Build strong local, state and national support for education.

3. Develop and deliver an effective curriculum which expands the definitions of literacy, competency, and cultural integration to include advanced technologies, problem solving, critical thinking and communications skills, and cultural enrichment for all students.

4. Develop and implement effective models of instructional delivery that make the best use of time, staff, advanced technologies, community resources and financial means to maximize student outcomes.

5. Create programs on continuous improvement, including evaluation of both staff and program effectiveness as keys of student learning and development.

6. Skillfully manage school system operations and facilities to enhance student learning.

7. Conduct and make use of significant research as a basis for problem solving and program planning of all kinds (p.6).

The AASA believes that all students completing administrative preparation programs should be able to demonstrate competence in each of the seven goal areas.

In 1989, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration published Improving the Preparation of School Administrators; An Agenda for Reform which outlined three areas of change: people, programs, and assessment. Several of the recommendations which would result in the greatest change in the preparation programs, in the commitment of candidates, and potentially in the salary level of superintendents were:

> Entrance standards to administrator preparation programs be dramatically raised to ensure that all candidates possess strong analytic ability, high administrative potential, and demonstrated success in teaching including
>
> > Assessment of analytic ability and administrative aptitude by a standardized national test, with admission to preparation programs limited to individuals scoring in the top quartile, and
> >
> > Assessment of teaching excellence by state licensure, a Master's Degree in teaching, and evidence of successful teaching in a classroom setting.
>
> The doctorate in educational administration (Ed.D.) be a prerequisite to national certification and state licensure for full-time administrators who are in charge of a school or school system, and
>
> > Sixth year or specialist degree programs in educational administration be abolished for this level of position
> >
> > Programs in educational administration terminating in a Master's Degree be abolished altogether.

One full-time year of academic residency and one full-time year of field residency be included in the Ed.D. preparation program. Modifications in the type or duration of the clinical residency are permitted for candidates with full-time administrative experience in education. Additional appropriate program requirements are to be determined by the faculty of the graduate school or graduate division in education at each institution (p.6).

One of the recommendations of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration was to develop a national professional standards board, made up primarily of practicing school administrators, that will be charged with developing and administering a national certification examination. The National Policy Board also recommended that states be encouraged to require candidates for licensure to pass this exam (p.7). While the writers would agree that superintendents desiring national certification should have to demonstrate their competence, the requirement of passing a national test should not be an automatic requirement for superintendents particularly those serving in small rural schools.

In the introduction to Leaders for America's Schools, Griffiths, Stout and Forsyth (1988) identified ten "troubling aspects" in educational administration. Two of these were:

Lack of licensure systems that promote excellence and

Lack of a national sense of cooperation in preparing school administrators (xiv).

Griffiths, Stout and Forsyth identified several roles that different groups could play in resolving the problems attendant to administrator preparation. Some of their suggestions were:

Professional Organizations -- Recruit intellectually superior and capable individuals into administrator preparation programs (p.13).

The profession should be involved in the preparation of educational administrators, especially in planning, implementing and assessing programs (p.14).

Universities -- Recognize that administration preparation programs should be like those in professional schools - emphasize the theoretical, clinical knowledge, applied research and supervised practice (p.17).

States -- Each state should have an administrative licensure board to establish standards, examine candidates and issue licenses (p.22).

Licensure should depend on the completion of a state approved program and demonstration of knowledge, skills and evidence of performance.

There should be a two-tier licensing system, entry level and fully licensed. An administrator could be fully licensed only after three successful years of full-time administrative performance.

There should be no granting of temporary licenses.

The license should be portable from state to state (p.22).

The last recommendation is seemingly in conflict with the recommendation that each state have its own licensing board although, as was noted earlier, states clearly have the right to establish their own certification requirements. Also, the only role that the National Policy Board proposes for the federal government is the funding of research in educational administration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It seems logical to the writers that national certification will only be possible if there is some type of national clearinghouse to oversee the process. Sparkman and Chapman (1991) state the need for a national clearinghouse or database for state certification information. They believe that such a national clearinghouse is especially important in light of the rapidity with which state requirements change. If nothing else, a national clearinghouse would give states contemplating a change a source of information (p.22). It is the intent of the writers to pursue this need and to seek to establish a national clearinghouse for certification requirements. Further, we would recommend that state certification agencies review the brochures which they dispense to applicants. In most cases they are poorly written and are not user friendly. A possible solution for this would be to have the department of tourism review it for readability and ease of use.

The writers would propose that the recommendations advanced by both the AASA and the National Policy Board be combined and that national certification be granted upon completion of the following:

1. Completion of a doctorate at an NCATE accredited institution.
2. Completion of a state approved preparation program in educational administration.
3. A minimum of three years **documented** successful experience in the central office of a school district. An alternative would be the completion of a one year, full-time paid internship in the central office of a district of at least 5,000 students with documented significant successful teaching experience.
4. Successful completion of a national competency test that is designed by a national professional standards board, consisting primarily of practicing school administrators.

If the recommendations were implemented, it would probably result in three different types of school administrators who would be found in the states. First, would be the "old-timer," who had been prepared under prior programs and had been grandfathered into the program. This administrator would probably be successful for the rest of his/her career, but would find his/her opportunities for advancement more limited over time. Second, would be the "state line" administrator. This person would probably receive his/her training at a non-doctoral degree granting institution within his/her home state, would be geographically limited to the state, and would be constrained for upward mobility by the lack of a terminal

degree. Third, would be the "national administrator." This person would be placed in national searches at the same level as the "state-line" administrator, because certification would be assured and would not be a concern of the employing districts. The end result would be a larger pool of candidates for a national search with greater opportunities for boards of education but also higher salary expectations on the part of the candidates. Soon, one could expect to see even larger differences between the successful candidate in the national search and the successful candidate of the state or regional search.

Certification has become a maze of regulations with very few states offering true reciprocity. Candidates who are involved in a national search will find the process even more frustrating in the years ahead without national certification. The insistence by state legislatures on the use of assessment centers, layered certificates, and national examinations are all laudable goals as long as they are part of a national certification program. However, as part of a state plan, they only reduce the pool of qualified candidates for any particular position, increase the frustration of boards of education and legislators, reduce their satisfaction with the candidate, and increase administrator turnover.

National certification or national reciprocity is an idea for which time has come. The mobile character of the population of the 21st century demands that school administrators be allowed to practice their craft in whatever school district needs their particular talents and skills without being burdened by parochial, burdensome, licensing/certification regulations.

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